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9-29-1998

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University Marketing and Communications, "09/29/1998 - Five Students Admit Responsibility For Prank.pdf" (1998). 1998. 642.
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98-386

September 29, 1998

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FIVE STUDENTS ADMIT RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRANK

CHARLESTON -- Five Eastern Illinois University students have admitted responsibility for an incident on Sunday, Sept. 20, in which items thought to be bottle bombs were found on the Eastern campus.

Carman Hall was evacuated at 9:40 p.m. when one device was discovered on the sixth floor. A similar one was later found at the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity house. The two items -- plastic bottles filled with fluid and what was thought to be an igniting device, were sent to the state crime laboratory, while police and arson specialists began an investigation on campus.

The five male students -- four juniors and a freshman, notified police of their involvement. "They have been very cooperative," said University Police Chief Tom Larson. "They said it was done as a prank, and that the bottles contained only water and a heating catalyst that would cause them to heat up and burst. They said no other

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chemicals or harmful devices were included." Friends who lived at both locations were the reported targets of the two pranks.

The students involved have been referred to the University Judicial Board for appropriate disciplinary action. Federal privacy law prohibits the release of the names of the students involved.

Student Judicial Officer Keith Kohanzo said that likely sanctions would include restitution for expenses incurred by the university, the fire department, the crime lab and the arson investigator's office.

"I have spoken with the students involved and they seem appropriately abashed by the unintended consequences of their prank," Kohanzo said. "Given the grim coincidence that last week a bomb at Rose-Human Institute in Terre Haute killed one of the students who had made it, I think the seriousness for with which we view such pranks is understandable."

A decision on possible criminal charges will not be made until the contents of the bottles are confirmed by the lab.